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IV.—*Journey from Peking to St. Petersburg, across the Desert of Gobi.* By C. M. GRANT, Esq.

Read, December 8, 1862.

TOWARDS the close of my stay in China in 1861, I passed several months at Tientsin, after the ratification of the Treaty, and while awaiting the issue of passports for the interior, I made a trip to the Great Wall, in the direction of Manchuria, and followed its course for about 40 miles. In this quarter, it is built of brick, having a granite foundation. I measured it several times, and found it always to be the same width, about 15 feet. I passed through numerous large towns, and found a warm mineral spring at a place called Tang-chuen, situated at the foot of a hill over which the Great Wall passes. This is a resort of persons suffering from cutaneous diseases, who bathe here. The heat of the water is about 100° Fahrenheit. The spring is within the precincts of a Buddhist temple, and a set of baths of various dimensions have been built round it. From thence I went to visit the Imperial Burying-ground of the present dynasty, near a town called Mala-boo; but, on presenting myself at the gates, I was told that I could not be allowed permission to enter. Upon this, I went to the chief Mandarin, to pay my visit and to ask leave to see the country, but, after a complimentary visit to that dignitary, was unable to obtain permission. My readiness to accept his explanations had, however, put him in such good humour, that he despatched a very handsomely worded letter to Prince Kung respecting my conduct, of which a copy was sent me.

Immediately after the receipt of this, I made application for a passport for Mongolia. It was at first refused, on the ground that the Mongols were not all thoroughly subdued. However, I was prepared to take all risks on myself, and at the end of three weeks, thanks to the perseverance of Mr. Bruce, I was provided at Peking with a Chinese passport, bearing the Imperial "chop," and an English passport for Russia, visé by the Russian Minister.

Through the kindness of one of the members of Her Majesty's Legation I was enabled to procure two baggage-carts and two mule-chairs.*

* The latter is an oblong vehicle, 6 to 7 feet in length, and 3 feet high. There are windows of cotton on each side, and the door is in front. After having carefully arranged his bed, the traveller enters and places himself in a reclining position; the machine is then raised by means of two strong wooden or bamboo poles which are fastened one on each side, and which form shafts, into which two mules are yoked, one in front and one behind. The forward and backward movement, caused by the jogging of these animals, makes the motion very disagreeable; but it must be admitted that the mule-chair is much more comfortable than the springless carts. It is a great inconvenience, however, that it is necessary to un-yoke one of the mules before it is possible to descend.

March 26, 1862.—I started from Peking at 10 A.M. Soon after passing the outer fortifications a most violent dust-storm arose, which heightened in its fury so suddenly that, before I had proceeded a mile from the City-Wall, I found that the baggage-mules were unable to contend with it. I therefore sought shelter at an inn, and after a little perseverance obtained accommodation. Here I was detained twenty hours, unable to sleep, and suffering intensely from the effects of the sand and the cold, which was very severe.

March 27.—At daybreak the storm began to abate, and on rising at seven o'clock I found the thermometer at 24° Fahr. Although the wind continued high, it was unaccompanied by sand, so I made a start. The ravages of the storm were perceptible in every direction: large trees were uprooted, hedges thrown down, and houses unroofed. In some spots the sand had formed mounds varying from one to six feet in height, and parts of the road were so completely covered over that it was impossible to trace it. At 6 P.M. I reached Hankow, 30 miles from Peking, where I was lucky enough to find a good inn.

March 28.—At 6 A.M. the thermometer stood at 30° Fahr., at 3 P.M. 54° . Hankow, where I halted this day, is situated at the mouth of the Kwankow Pass, and was formerly a strongly fortified military station. A sub-branch of the Great Wall passes through it.

March 29.—The cold having abated, we started for the Kwan-kow Pass. The track through this pass is 15 miles in length. It is very rugged and tortuous, always difficult, in some places dangerous. It is a rare occurrence for vehicles to cross this pass without some accident happening, and my experience would lead me to recommend that any traveller following in my footsteps should avail himself of a coolie-chair. I rode across; but had I known at starting what kind of path was before me, I should certainly have ordered a chair. Great numbers of Chinamen, in companies, passed me, carrying large cases. On inquiry I discovered that these formed part (the rest having been sent on before) of ten thousand stand of rifles, which the Russian Government had engaged to give to the Chinese, in part consideration of the cession to the Russians of the country lying north of the Amoor. I also learnt with pleasure that these arms should have been delivered two years previously, but that the Russians had withheld them, so that they might not be used against the Allied armies of England and France.

The mountain-scenery on each side of the track, though not grand, may be described as bold. But the feature I was most pleased with was a large frozen waterfall. It was the first I had ever seen, and the sun shining upon it gave it a most beautiful and

striking effect. The occasional streams were frozen nearly a foot thick in some places, although the heat had already begun to thaw the surface.

Several droves of Tartar ponies, of from 300 to 400 head each, passed me to-day on their way to Chinese markets. They were very strong, wiry, little animals, and I was given to understand that I might purchase them at three dollars a head, or about thirteen shillings. At a very narrow part, where the track was precipitous and uneven, I met a Mongol Mandarin of the blue button, in charge of about two hundred coolies, bearing cases of arms and four ammunition-boxes. He very angrily ordered my people to stop, whilst I told them to go on. Our opposition was about to terminate in an encounter, when my servant interfered, and represented me as *Ta-ying-ko Tien-fung*, "the great Englishman of Heavenly abundance." *Tien-fung* was the name by which I was known in China. All foreigners are named anew soon after their arrival in the Celestial Empire. The path was immediately cleared for us, and the Mandarin and I saluted each other with a *chin-chin*.

Passed through a gateway of the main portion branch of the Great Wall. The Wall here is in an excellent state of preservation. At 2 P.M. arrived at Chetow, the first village to the north of the pass, boasting a very large inn, which presented an appearance of great bustle. About two hundred donkeys were being laden to go through the pass. Chetow lies in a spacious, highly cultivated amphitheatre, the hills surrounding which, robed in the softest and most varied hues, were hemmed in by a back-ground of distant snow-capped mountains which reflected the rays of the evening sun, forming a landscape of singular beauty and grandeur.

Yuliang, which I next passed, is a small fortified town of one street, apparently a military station. On approaching Hulayén is a temple, on the top of an isolated rock, having a great resemblance in the distance to Dumbarton Castle. Here I stopped for the night.

March 30.—Fahr. 46° to 82°. Started from Hulayén (pronounced Why-lien) at 7 A.M. Passed Tatumah, a town which seems to have been of some importance, but which is now very dilapidated and almost forsaken. Passed successively Sachung, a large fortified market-town, Tupali, and Paognan, a fortified town, situated between Sachung and Kee-Ming, which is invariably placed 20 miles to the eastward of its actual position. Here is made the Wong-chu, a yellow wine, the most highly esteemed of Chinese wines, and only found at the yamuns of the highest dignitaries. Kee-Ming, my night stage, 30 miles from Hulayén (Why-lien), is a large fortified city at the foot of a mountain, and is apparently

liable to inundation. Here is the General Post Office for the north of China.

March 31.—Started from Keeming at 7 A.M., passed a good-looking village, called Hoi-ho. Also a new village called Sha-Hoh. Breakfasted at She-shi-foo, 10 miles from Kee-Ming. The road between the two last-named places is often difficult and rugged. At one point, when rounding the apparently impassable corner of a rock, we found the path only just wide enough to allow a passage; between high cliffs on the one side, and on the other a rapid current. Sometimes the road is very steep, and should one of the saddle animals make a false step, its rider would be very apt to be precipitated into the boiling stream beneath. In the spring, when the snow melts, this stream attains the dimensions of a large river. Passed several coal-pits in operation to-day. The coal is not of a very good description, being small and scaley.

April 1.—Suen-ho-Fu, which I reached towards nightfall, is a large fortified city of from 80,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The main streets are wide and clean, having avenues of large trees on either side, on which countless crows had formed colonies. The city is under the government of twenty-four mandarins of high grade, amongst whom it is reported are several members of the Imperial family. Here is the chief seat of the Mission of St. Lazarus, at whose head is M. Götlicher. I was informed that the Mission numbered 600 converts. Some very fine felt hats were offered to me for sale, Suen-ho-Fu being the greatest emporium for felt in China, besides which the inhabitant usually manufacture their own paper. Breakfasted at Yulien; fare—*omelettes aux fines herbes* mutton-chops, *pommes-de-terre frites*, excellent scones, teal, claret, coffee, and *chasse*—not so bad for Mongolia. I greatly fear I gave the Llama here too much brandy. He liked it amazingly, however, and, producing his prayer-book, chanted blessings on me by way of shewing his gratitude.

At about four o'clock I arrived at Chang-Kia-Kow, called by the Russians, *Kalgan*. It is situated 40° 45' N. lat., and 115° E. long. This is the most important commercial town in the north of China, inasmuch as all imports from, and exports to Russia, pass through its gates. It is 14 li in length, or about 4½ miles. A great part of this, however, is suburb; the actual city is fortified. The total population is estimated at 200,000, of whom 10,000 are soldiers. The municipal authorities are eight mandarins of high rank. On inquiring the reason for the report of a gun which I heard, I was told that a despatch had just been sealed for the Emperor, and that it was customary to give such a despatch a salute.

On my arrival two Mandarins of the white button waited upon

me for my passport, which they took away with them, but returned in about one hour, saying that it was in order.

April 2.—This morning I paid my visit to the Taou-tai. After waiting in the court-yard of the Yamun for half an hour, I was admitted. He was a surly old fellow, of the pink button, and I was very much disgusted with him. I asked him to render me assistance in procuring camels. He told me to apply to my hotel-keeper; that he had nothing to do with it. I wished to be furnished with a passport in the Mongol language; he told me through his Secretary that it was unnecessary, and that I had nothing to fear. The Mandarins to the east of Peking had shown me every courtesy in their power, giving me cavalry-escorts and extra servants, besides ordering that I should be well received wherever I went. This old fellow, on the contrary, appeared almost disposed to throw obstacles in my way. I observed here many tons of tea, which were being prepared for transport to Russia. It is said that both the import and export trade of Russia is on the decrease; but, notwithstanding this, the Russians have the contracts for the superior qualities of teas, and I am inclined to think they will continue to keep them, as they pay such far higher prices than other foreigners, and have, besides, the advantage of a very old connexion with the people who grow the best teas. Excellent potatoes are grown here, and very fine beef and mutton are also to be procured.

Extensive mines of silver and copper have been worked in Shivan-ze, but are now, I believe, discontinued for State reasons.

In the neighbourhood of Chung-Kia-Kow the sportsman may find full employment for his gun: wild duck, teal, wild geese, and snipe; deer, antelopes, wolves, leopards, wild cat, the eagle, and occasionally the tiger, are among the varieties of game he may depend upon.

I made an engagement with two Mongols for five camels and a cart to take me to Kiachta. They were to accompany me as servants, and I was to provide my own food. They asked me 170 taels, or about 57*l.*, but my servant persuaded them to reduce this demand to 110 taels—about 35*l.* Both my servants declined to cross the desert with me, being afraid of the effects of the cold. I sent them back to Peking, as well as my pony, as I was given to understand that the herbage would not prove sufficient to support an animal that was accustomed to good food.

April 3.—I purchased provisions here, consisting of a joint of beef, 1 cwt. of potatoes, 28 lbs. of biscuits, and plenty of tea and sugar. I also had 2 dozen of brandy, 2 dozen of port-wine, 1 dozen of claret, and 1 dozen of rum, besides plenty of tobacco. I did not take more solids, as I laboured under the impression that I should find on the route beef, mutton, cheese, and milk. I likewise dis-

posed of my own tent, which I afterwards had much reason to regret.

In passing the gate of the Great Wall, where all duties are collected, my passport was demanded. Outside of the gate is the Mongol settlement, and a short distance beyond is a village inhabited both by Chinese and Mongols, whose domiciles are artificial caves, hollowed out in the side of a rising ground. They are regularly arranged, and present the appearance of streets one above another. These are said to be very warm in the winter.

The journey to-day was performed in a cart drawn by horses. The road is rugged and stiff, so much so as to render it almost impossible for a camel with a load to traverse it.

On ascending the highest summit of the mountain range which separates Mongolia from China, a magnificent panorama is presented to the view, over the wildest and most majestic mountain scenery. The Great Wall crosses this desolate spot, but the ravages of time have almost levelled it with the ground.

After gazing our fill, we gradually descended to a distance of about 26 miles from Kalgan, where, lying under the slope of a fertile hill, we arrived at a caravan of one hundred sleeping camels. In a dirty, tattered tent, a bright fire illumine the faces of a dozen Mongols, who were seated around it on their haunches, each bowl in hand, anxiously expecting the evening meal. After tasting their soup, I returned to my cart, and passed the night without undressing. As, moreover, I did not quite like my situation, I did not sleep, but kept my revolver within arm's length, in case it might be wanted.

April 4. Fahr. 20°.—Stations, I think, are named from the various wells on the desert: there is seldom a habitation of any kind in the neighbourhood. The name of this station is Taban. A beautiful morning. Hundreds of camels grazing on the green slopes. Our line of march from day to day is somewhat as follows. The camels having been collected, are first arranged in five files, the same baggage being always fastened on the same beast. Through each camel's nose is passed a wooden peg, to which is attached a cord about six feet long. In marching, the loose end of the cord is fastened to some of the gear on the back of the camel in advance, and in this way one man might guide a thousand camels, if it was not that the peg in the nose becomes loose sometimes, or the cord gives way, in which case a short delay results for re-adjustment. A strong camel is now harnessed to my cart, which is a cumbrous vehicle, with broad, heavy wooden wheels. There is no iron on any part of it, and it is covered with felt. The length is about 7 feet, and the width 30 inches. The tent is struck, thrown over the back of a camel, and off we start in Indian file, my Gobi chariot in the centre, with the two Mongols whom I engaged doing duty as guards, one on each side.

By 9 A.M., the thermometer had gone up to 40°. After travelling 60 li, or 20 miles, we halted at 4 P.M., at a place called Tahungko. One of these encampments is highly picturesque. The camels, arranged as usual in five files, are made to sit on their haunches, and in five minutes are all disburthened of their loads. (It takes fully half-an-hour to pack them every morning.) After the baggage is lowered from their backs, the nose-cord is fastened round their necks, and they are allowed to graze till dusk, when they are again collected and secured each to his own particular load. The tent, about 18 feet long by 12 feet wide, having two poles about 10 feet high, is now pitched. Sufficient *argol* is collected for the night, and a fire is lit in a circular grate, which is placed in the centre. The argol gives a bright red heat. An open cauldron is now placed on the grate, and filled with water which has been drawn from a neighbouring well, or if there is snow on the ground, sufficient is collected for culinary purposes. The first refreshment consists of pounded brick-tea, which is thrown into the water and boiled. The Mongols drink this without sugar, from wooden bowls, which they clean by licking it with the tongue, and then place it in the breast of their coats. The next dish consists of boiled beef or mutton, which they eat in junks, swallowing large pieces at a time. Some millet is thrown into the water in which the meat has been boiled, which makes a soup. The wooden bowl is again resorted to, and the repast is followed by a pipe. The chief of this caravan drank samshoo, which he had purchased at Chang-Kia-Kow ; but the other Mongols had to content themselves with water. When a stranger enters, which is often the case at meal-times, he salutes the inmates with "Mindooena !" (May all be well), and is offered some of the fare ; and as a matter of courtesy, pipes are exchanged, which it is Mongol etiquette to refill when returned. After the camels have been collected and secured for the night, another cauldron of tea is made, another pipe is lit, and then huddling as near the fire as possible, the men undress and sleep naked, with their sheep-skin coats for a covering, and their boots for a pillow. They never move from the position in which they fall asleep, till they rise in the morning. If they did, and the coat was to fall from off them, they would, on a cold night, be frozen to death. At three o'clock in the morning they rise, and whilst the camels are being laden a cauldron of tea is prepared. They drink this, mixed with millet, before starting, and it serves them till their evening meal. In taking their repasts they squat in Indian fashion, round the fire, sitting upon their feet.

April 5. At 4 A.M. Fahr. stood at 11°. The camels wanted a rest, having eaten little for two days, so we remained to-day at Tahung-ko.—4 P.M. We have had a snow-storm for the last three hours, the wind so strong as to blow the snow almost horizontally.

April 6. At 6 A.M. Fahr. was 10° below Zero, or 42° of cold.—It was so cold last night I could not sleep. A bottle of claret at my side was completely frozen. At 9 A.M. started, and at 3 P.M. arrived at a station called Hamka. The two Mongols with whom I made the engagement left, having contracted with the chief of the caravan to take me to Kiachta, giving him a small proportion of what I had paid them.

April 7. Fahr. 4° below Zero. The snow 3 feet deep.—We cannot proceed to-day.

April 8. Fahr. 10° above Zero.—We started this morning before daybreak. Saw a herd of deer. Arrived at a station called Ungol Tzar-a-nore.

April 9. Fahr. 10° above Zero.—The Mongols make thread and cord from the wool plucked from under the neck of the camel, with which they mend their coats.

The wind was so cold to-day that the camels laid down several times. At 3 P.M. arrived at Tsankal.

April 10. Fahr. 10° to 32° .—A splendid day. Large eagles at easy shots. Lots of rats, resembling the kangaroo-rat. Arrived at Oonegut.

April 11. Fahr. 24° to 50° .—Two Mongols paid us a visit: one rode on a saddled bullock, the other on a camel. They begged tobacco, which my chief refused. Arrived at Borro' Hotuter.

April 12. Fahr. 30° .—So far the country has been gently undulating—occasionally hilly. To-day extensive plains. Arrived at B'yshunt.

April 13. Fahr. 30° to 42° .—Arrived at Shirray. Visited a *tseuma* or temple. It is a low mud house, having a Buddha on the altar. Three or four Llamas live in the vicinity in *gharries*. The *gharry* is a stationary tent, made of staves, which are trellised and covered with felt. There is a hole in the centre of the roof, through which the smoke makes its exit.

A woman paid us a visit. The Mongols pounced upon her to mend their clothes and boots. I bought a little bit of cheese from her, which had a peculiar taste. The name of the station to-day is Ortoghal Tseuma.

April 15. Fahr. 43° to 72° .—The land gently undulating, apparently higher as we advance, and vegetation rather richer. Numerous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Several whirlwinds of sand passed quite close to us. It was a lovely calm evening when we encamped on a perfectly flat and vast plain. The station on which we then were is called Taban Talloghai.

April 16. Fahr. 40° to 70° .—We encamped to-day at a station called Gobi, situated under the brow of a high precipitous hill, apparently red sandstone. The soil so far has been a yellow clay. The track we have made has always been north-west. It is covered

over with a slight coating of yellow sand, studded with innumerable little carnelians and agates, together with some spar and sandstone.

April 17. Fahr. 26° to 62° .—I found myself to-day in the midst of curious rocks and hills, presenting every sign of volcanic action. Immense blocks of marble are thrown here and there: there is also granite and slate in abundance, while numerous caverns, high up in the rocks, form the resort of great flocks of birds, resembling the swallow in appearance and the pigeon in size. Large herds of deer and quail in great numbers were also perceived. Arrived at At-turawah.

April 18. Fahr. 36° to 48° .—It blew a hurricane all night, and we could not stir this morning. The camels lay all day till towards evening with their backs to the wind—a repetition, in short, of the storm of the 26th of March, on leaving Pekin. One camel made off during the storm, and its loss was not discovered till next day. Arrived in the evening at Tuptuntoolaghai.

April 19. Fahr. 34° to 70° .—Fine morning, blowing all the rest of the day. The proprietor of the lost camel started in search of it, taking random instructions from me. Crossed many sand-hills to-day, and fell in with a small lake. Encamped at Gashong.

April 20. Fahr. 28° to 36° .—Arrived at a station called Hungor. The man who had lost his camel returned without having recovered it, but started once more in full faith I should put him on the right track. To-day we passed six withered trees and visited a dry well.

April 21. Fahr. 36° to 80° .—Killed a lizard to-day. Great numbers of flies, jumping on the grass. Arrived at a station called By-Yung-Gobi.

April 22. Fahr. 50° to 72° .—Passed four withered trees. Great numbers of quail to-day, and several miles of brushwood. Crossed a stream of beautifully clear water. The Mongol returned, having found his camel where I indicated, and is consequently full of devotion to me. Met a caravan transporting Russian cloth. Instead of shaking hands, the Mongols cross each other's arms. Arrived at Towah.

April 23. Fahr. 42° to 46° .—Hail to-day and very gloomy. Arrive at Katullusah.

April 24. Fahr. 26° to 46° .—Beautiful day, but snow six inches deep. Plenty of deer, several eagles, flocks of birds. Country hilly. Arrived at Hourri-shunt.

April 25. Fahr. 46° to 60° .—Arrived at Dewan-Shirray.

April 26. Fahr. 48° to 68° .—Arrived at Ooté.

April 27. Fahr. 68° to 74° .—Beautiful sunset. Rocky mountains in the west. Arrived at Tooroo.

April 28. Fahr. 48° .—To-day we pass through a range of rocky hills, which present a most remarkable appearance. Sometimes the

rocks have a resemblance to the ruins of a fortified castle; sometimes it would seem as though a village had existed. They often assume fantastic shapes, but their great singularity consists in their formation. Each rock appears to have been built as it were by art; one stone lies upon or alongside another, and although the shape is different, they remind one involuntarily of the Giant's Causeway, in the north of Ireland. We encamped to-day at Tsaran Boloz.

April 29. Fahr. 44° to 48° .—Our track lay principally through a sandy desert. We arrive at Zotogh.

April 30. Fahr. 34° to 42° .—The country to-day was undulating and hilly; the herbage somewhat richer. At 3 P.M. we arrived at the domicile of Batma, where the chief of the caravan, a high Llama or priest, came to meet us. All the Mongols descended from their camels on his approach, and after bending almost to the ground, offered their uncovered head for a benediction, which the priest gave by laying on his hands.

On arrival at the gharry, Batma's family came to salute and embrace him. The women were dressed in their most gaudy finery, and wore immense ornaments in their hair and round the neck. Virgins are distinguished by a girdle tied round their waist, which is no longer worn after marriage.

The name of this station is Arrah-atton-shoh. It is not on the direct track to Kiachta: we have, in fact, come considerably out of our route, that the chief might visit his family. We spent four days here, Mrs. Batma presenting me every morning with boiled sheep's neck, which is tasty. The milk of the camel seems richer; but I had not an opportunity of tasting it. Several sheep and calves die from disease: these are cooked and eaten, and the skins preserved for clothes. During my stay here the tent was placed at my sole disposal. I had also numerous visits daily from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, begging for matches, tobacco, brandy, and powder, besides many inquiries for razors, needles, and thread. I recommend travellers to take these with them as presents.

May 5 to 8.—Our track lay through high mountains, where we saw numerous herds of deer. Starting alone to shoot hares, which are numerous here, I observed, as I thought, a buck, and ran in the direction along which it would pass, with the intention of shooting it: to my dismay I discovered, on a near approach, that it was a large wolf. He did not alter the quiet pace at which he was going until I fired, when he ran off. I understand that in packs they sometimes attack a caravan.

At all stations cattle and sheep are penned for the night and guarded by watch-dogs of a very fine breed, resembling what one could imagine a cross between a Great Saint-Bernard and an English sheep-dog.

May 9. Fahr. 32° to 90°.—Scenery mountainous ; roads often very steep. Ourga, the capital of Mongolia, is visible in the distance, situated in a valley ; one side of the mountains covered with fir-trees, the other side perfectly barren.

On arriving at Ourga I presented myself at the Russian Consulate, where I was very hospitably received. The Consul, who speaks French, was absent ; but I made myself tolerably well understood to the acting Consul by means of the Mongolian language. An elegant phaeton, drawn by a splendid Arab, which had made the journey from India *viâ* China proper and the desert of Gobi, was placed at my disposal ; and what with driving, billiards, and good living, I passed at Ourga two very pleasant days. The Russian establishment numbers about twelve persons. There is a colony of Chinese and about 25,000 Mongols, 10,000 of whom are priests. Each family educates one of its children as a priest : he is looked upon as a gentleman, and is not supposed to do hard work.

I hired four camels here to take me to Kiachta, at which place I arrived in four days, over a road so well-known that I need not describe it, as the scenery and ordinary "incidents of travel" upon it have been frequently laid before the general reader.

From Kiachta I proceeded to Lake Baikal, which I crossed in 8 hours in a steamer, thence to Irkutsk, and by Krasnoyarsk to Tobolsk, where, during an inundation of the great river Obi, I took steamer to Tumen, in about 62° N. Hence I returned to Europe by Ekaterinburg (near which I visited the celebrated mines of the Demidoff family at Nishni Tagilsk, where, within a radius of 10 miles, iron, copper, gold, platinum, and precious stones are found), and thence by Kasan and St. Petersburg. Actual time of travel from Pekin to Kiachta, 46 days. (Distance not stated.)

I had long been convinced that a more rapid communication between China and England could be attained by the adoption of the overland route *viâ* Mongolia and Siberia, and it was mainly with a view of carrying out this idea that I gathered on my journey every information bearing on the subject.

Although the foregoing is a very rude and imperfect sketch, the experiences of that journey have fully corroborated my previous anticipations regarding the practicability of a courier express being organised across the desert of Gobi, similar to that adopted in America between the Mississippi and California. But even this improved means of communication will, it is anticipated, give place ere long to a perfect system of electric telegraphy between London, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiachta, Pekin, and the Taku Forts.